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ABSTRACT

This report discusses the feasibility of implementing the Ogontz Plan, a "live laboratory" program which supplements the existing social studies curriculums in elementary and secondary schools, in the Seattle Public School District. The objectives of the plan are: (1) to promote international understanding by sharing educational experiences, and (2) to teach the sameness of people while explaining the different values that are the product of varied environments. Foreign students at the University of Washington and cooperating public schools would work together in providing direct, personal contact with native speakers of foreign cultures in the social studies classes. This report discusses: (1) evaluation and objectives of the Ogontz Plan, (2) selection of subject field and appropriate grade level, (3) administration of the plan, (4) financial support, (5) recommendations, and (6) student participant background. (RL)

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FEASIBILITY STUDY ON IMPLEMENTATION OF THE "OGONTZ PLAN FOR MUTUAL INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION" IN THE SEATTLE PUBLIC SCHOOL DISTRICT*

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
OFFICE OF EDUCATION

Toshio Nishi

March 1971

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This feasibility study was financed by a developmental grant from the Romance Languages and Literature Department, the University of Washington, and sponsored by the Foundation for International Understanding through Students (FUITS).

A survey of the interest of public school administrators and teachers toward the Ogontz Plan** involved interviews with the following people:

A deputy superintendent, Seattle Public School Administrative and Service Center
A social studies specialist, Seattle Public School Administrative and Service Center
Principal, director of social studies, director of foreign languages, Roosevelt High School, Seattle

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* I wish to express my deep appreciation to Mr. Bud Bard, Jr., of FUITS, for his constant constructive suggestions and also to Dr. Victor Hanzeli, Romance Languages and Literature Dept., for arranging my financial support.

** Hereafter the term "the Plan" will be used for the Ogontz Plan for Mutual International Education.

FL002 190

Principal, Eckstein Junior High School, Seattle
Principal, Marshall Junior High School, Seattle
Ex-social studies coordinator, Seattle Public School Administrative and Service Center
Principal, Newport High School, Bellevue
Social studies coordinator, Bellevue Public School Administrative Office

This study attempts to report as accurately as possible the opinions expressed in these interviews ad to interpret these views in terms of feasibility of the Plan in the Seattle or Bellevue School District.

Organization of the report is as follows:

I. Evaluation of the Objectives
II. Selection of subject field & appropriate grade level
III. Administration of the Plan
IV. Financial support of the Plan
V. Recommendations
VI. Appendix: The Plan, and a list of the nationalities represented at the University of Washington

I. Evaluation of the Objectives

The Plan attempts to implement the following objectives in public school classrooms.

(i) To promote international understanding through sharing educational experiences.
(ii) To teach the sameness of people while explaining

the different values that are the product of varied environment.

Pessimistic statements concerning the objectives have been voiced: "Is it indeed possible for American junior or senior high school students to learn appreciation of different cultures or nationsl through foreign students?" The ideal of international peace exemplifies frustration over human nature and man's persistent failure to achieve such peace. Even though American students may learn differences and similarities of people from varying cultures, such learning itself might accelerate frustration by emphasizing more the gap between reality and the ideal. The United States has been involved in various international organizations for the purpose of promoting world peace and at the same time she is deeply entangled in international conflicts. Awareness of such inconsistencies results in disillusion about the notion of "international peace" or "international understanding toward better world."

No matter how minuscule the Plan's contribution to promotion of "international peace" may be, such constant efforts should be encouraged. This stance was enthusiastically supported by those interviewed and they agreed with the basic philosophy of the Plan. "It is worthwhile to try."

II. Selection of subject field & appropriate grade level

Social studies and foreign language were the topics of discussion. In the area of foreign language instruction foreign students could be used in two possible ways: (i)

for basic instruction such as pronunciation drilling or simple question-and-answer conversation, and (ii) for special "guest" session of free conversation. This type of activity might be limited as most junior or senior high school students are not fluent enough to converse in a foreign language. Another approach would be to use the foreign students as special instructors for the more advanced students desiring to go at a faster rate than the class. The general consensus was that their use would be more limited in this area than in Social Studies.

Furthermore, since the number of different foreign languages currently offered in public schools is limited, the number and variety of nationalities which could be used in this area is also limited. French, German, and Spanish are the primary foreign languages currently taught in public schools. This is not to negate the value of foreign students in foreign language classrooms, but it is simply a matter of priority and maximization of available personnel resources.

In the area of Social Studies (e. g., history, politics, geography) foreign students could present perspectives on their country's political and socio-economic conditions, or on its relationship with the United States. In this field there will be more free discussion and American students will benefit more in their learning through comparison, evaluation, and awareness of other cultures and political systems. In turn the foreign students will learn about the differences between America and their own countries through answering questions raised by American students. Here lies the core of this Plan.

Selection of appropriate grade levels is a difficult decision. Only a pilot study of the Plan implemented at several grade levels could establish a definite answer. However, interviewees tended to agree that the higher grade levels (e. g., 9th, 10th, 11th, & 12th) would benefit more, assuming that they already have a wider exposure to pertinent international and national events and more interest. Also, higher grade level students would probably ask more stimulating questions (this is strictly my personal view, since I have been invited frequently to talk about my own country at varying grade levels of Seattle public schools).

III. Administration of the Plan

Firstly, it is necessary to establish an administrative office through the University of Washington. For instance, selection of qualified foreign students will be one of the major tasks of the University, based on consultations with the participating public schools concerning desired nationalities. Arrangement of time allocation and transportation for foreign students is another task.

Secondly, the participating school needs a coordinator for its own curriculum schedule. It is important that selected foreign students, public school coordinator, and an administrative staff member of the Plan meet to decide what the school wants from the foreign students. If possible, every social studies teacher interested in the Plan from the school should attend an initial meeting with foreign students.

Thirdly, orientation for selected foreign students by the administrative member is necessary to firmly establish their responsibilities in the classroom.

Interviewees stated that there will be little administrative difficulty in terms of adjusting their existing curriculum to accommodate the Plan.

IV. Financial support of the Plan

The Plan is considered worthwhile to be carried out in classrooms. However, pessimistic sentiments prevail among interviewees concerning money. This pessimism is a reflection of Seattle's worsening economic situation. The interviewees were most concerned about the flexibility of school budgets. All stated that there is absolutely no money for the Plan now from the Seattle Public School Administrative and Service Center. However, if the March 23rd Seattle education levy is passed, the Plan will be considered for support by the Administrative and Service Center in question.

V. Recommendations

The University of Washington maintains a large reservoir of able foreign students who are currently "underutilized" and who perceive themselves as treated merely as "guests" in the United States. Most of them are willing to participate in any opportunity to enhance their over-all learning and at the same time to represent their culture. Indeed, it is often questioned, "do foreign students really contribute to the American community or the University?" The problem lies in the negligence or ignorance of both the community and foreign students to explore the latter's capability to contribute to the former.

If the Plan is financed by passing of the March or May levy, then the following is recommended:

(1) A pilot implementation of the Plan in only one high school is necessary and sufficient to see what can be done to improve future operation of the Plan. Large-scale execution of the Plan throughout a school district at this stage is undesirable for a thorough examination of the Plan. Roosevelt High School is recommended for the initial trial, as it is advantageously located to the University. Although Newport High School in Bellevue is very willing to implement the pilot Plan, transportation poses a serious problem at this time.

(2) The establishment of an administrative office on the part of the University of Washington is necessary. At the present stage one administrator, who will be responsible for coordinating all the activities, is sufficient. As the Plan expands, additional assistant staff members should be employed.

(3) Five qualified foreign students should be selected by a committee established by the University. The committee might consist of one foreign student advisor, one administrative staff of the Plan, one member from FUITS, one representative from the Foreign Student Council, and one American student. The committee's decision would be final.

(4) The availability of these five "teaching aide" positions should be fully advertised among all foreign students through publications of the Office of International Services and of FUITS. Application forms should be printed.

(5) Emphasis on social studies is desirable. However, arrangement could also be made for language instruction at the public schools on a smaller scale.

(6) Continuous evaluation of the Plan's achievement should be conducted by American high school students, public school faculties, and foreign students involved.

THE OGONTZ PLAN*

Objectives

1. To promote international understanding by sharing educational experiences.

2. To teach the sameness of people while explaining the different values that are the product of varied environments.

How the Plan Works

The Ogontz Plan is a "live laboratory" program which supplements the existing social studies curricula in elementary and secondary schools. Each participating school, aided by consultation with the Ogontz Plan Liaison for Universities and Foreign Students, selects at least one "team" of five foreign students. Only those students who can communicate easily and are well versed in their countries and cultures, are recommended for participation in the program. Each foreign student comes to the school one-half day a week for three weeks and teaches the same class either in consecutive weeks or as best fits his own study schedule and the school's program.

Educators have long been aware that existing social studies curricula of even the highest level have been lacking in the personal contacts required to make them alive and meaningful to young people. Attempts to bring people of foreign cultures into the schools were too involved, too time consuming, and not an integral part of the student's learning process. More often than not, the casual visits of the students were regarded as holidays rather than as actual learning experiences. The Ogontz Plan satisfied this need for personal contact with foreign cultures. Its simple, yet carefully planned, structure is flexible enough to adapt to almost all school programs at any grade level.

*The Carnegie Endowment for International Peace has granted $6,000 to the Committee for the Ogontz Plan for a survey of its national potential.

(1) The Ogontz Plan has brought the world in the form of real people into the classroom with a minimum of effort by school personnel. If the school or school district were to seek the services of foreign students, the same cost and effort would be duplicated again and again. Competition for the limited number of foreign students would create confusion and eventually work against the poorer school districts.

(2) "Living experiences" supplement existing studies history and foreign language courses. The foreign student represents and interprets his own culture better than a written textbook. He is not a teacher in the formal sense, but someone who can add human content in a manner impossible for the American teacher. Cross-cultural experiences are not available to most teachers, so the foreign student takes up where the teacher's experience and formal training leave off.

(3) The 15-week format assures a broad-based multicultural experience for faculty, pupils, and foreign students. The areas represented by the teams are chosen by faculty to conform to the existing course of study.

(4) The foreign student is paid the same wage as a substitute teacher, from the Ogontz Plan Foreign Student Disbursement Fund. This fund is supported by cooperating schools.

(5) The foreign student prepares his contribution only after consulting with faculty.

(6) The foreign student represents the leadership class of his country. Teaching in the schools, he will be exposed to another facet of American life. He will gain in respect and understanding for the United States and will reflect those attitudes when he returns home.

(7) The foreign student needs to justify himself, to make himself understood, and to be liked. Because the Ogontz Plan provides for this by giving him a platform on which to talk, he enthusiastically supports it.

How the School Participates

A school interested in participating communicates with a Committe representative for elementary and secondary schools, who then arranges a meeting to explain the philosophy, method, and purpose of the plan to the principal and faculty. Areas, dates, grades, and techniques for adapting the Ogontz Plan to existing curriculum are discussed. At a second meeting, the principal, department head, and faculty meet with the five foreign students. The purposes of this meeting are:

(1) To enable the teachers and students to become acquainted and to establish an informal and friendly working relationship

(2) To find out specifically what each student has to offer

(3) To make very clear to the foreign student what is expected of him (most are usually very vague on this point at the outset and valuable time is lost)

(4) To determine satisfactory visiting schedules

(5) To explain how the American educational system works and the foreign students' responsibilities to this planned International Educational Program

(6) To plan extracurricular activities for the students, such as teas at the school or dinner in a private home.

Adequate time is allowed for planning and the orientation of faculty, foreign students, and pupils. Most teachers find this program a new idea and they need to understand clearly how it will enrich their own teaching. To most foreign students, also, the Ogontz Plan is a new idea, as is the American educational system.

Principals, faculty, and foreign students compiete an evaluation form at the termination of the program. The careful assessment of these critiques enables the Committee to correct problems as well as to avoid future errors.

Financial Procedures

Cooperating schools will be asked to contribute to the Committee for the Ogontz Plan approximately $300 for one academic year.* Of this about 80% will be distributed by the Ogontz Plan Foreign Student Reimbursement Fund to each team for services and transportation; the residue will defray administrative costs. The Reimbursement Fund was created to facilitate payment to foreign students by minimizing the budgetary red tape inherent in most school systems and to circumvent local laws that exclude a person who has not sworn allegiance to the United States from working for the school district.

*According to Professional Agreements 1970-1971 between the Seattle School District No. 1 and Seattle Alliance of Educators (Article VIII, Section C, Item No. 5), a short-term substitute assignement made for up to one-half day shall be paid at one-half day rate, plus one dollar (about $16.00). $16 x 3 weeks (one-half day a week for three weeks per foreign student) x 5 foreign students = $240.00.

Nationalities Represented at the University of Washington

1970 - 1971

Nationality			
Afghanistan	3	Japan	69
Argentina	6	Kenya	3
Australia	14	Korea	61
Austria	3	Kuwait	1
Bahama	1	Latvia	1
Belgium	3	Lebanon	5
Bolivia	4	Liberia	7
Brazil	3	Libya	6
B. Guina	4	Malawi	3
B. W. Indies	5	Madagas	1
Burma	2	Macao	1
Cameroon	4	Malaya	10
Canada	275	Mexico	9
Carol I.	1	Netherlands	25
Ceylon	3	New Zealand	5
Chile	16	Nicaragua	1
Columbia	3	Nigeria	11
Congo	1	Norway	40
Costa Rica	2	Pakistan	12
Cuba	5	Panama	3
Cyprus	1	Paraguay	2
Czechoslovakia	5	Peru	6
Denmark	1	Philippines	39
Ecuador	1	Poland	3
Egypt	16	Portugal	1
El Salvador	1	Romania	1
England	61	Ryuku Is.	5
Ethopia	6	Saudi Arabia	7
Finland	9	Scotland	1
Formosa	172	Sierra Leone	1
France	22	Singapore	6
Germany	38	Spain	2
Ghana	5	Sudan	4
Greece	7	Sweden	15
Guatemala	1	Switzerland	14
Honduras	2	Syria	2
Hongkong	101	Tanzania	3
Hungary	1	Thailand	40
Iceland	3	Trs. Jord.	4
India	126	Turk As.	9
Indonesia	2	Turk Eur.	5
Iran	25	Uganda	3
Iraq	1	Union of Africa	6
Ireland	5	Venezuela	2
Israel	11	Viet Nam	3
Italy	6	Yugoslavia	1
Jamaica	8	Zambia	1
Japan	69		